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News Release

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Project Partners Celebrate Neponset River Salt Marsh Restoration

BOSTON—Fifteen acres of wetlands along the Neponset River in Dorchester are again flooded with salt water twice a day, after decades of being buried under deposits of mud dredged from the river and the growth of invasive plant matter that prevented full tidal flushing. During a tour of the project site with state and federal officials, Environmental Secretary Stephen R. Pritchard praised the collaborative effort led by the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) to restore a portion of the oldest protected salt marsh in North America. The project site is part of the first salt marshes to be protected in Massachusetts as natural assets, having been acquired in 1896 by the Metropolitan Park Commission (predecessor of the MDC, now DCR). “This project is a great example of the power of partnerships. It shows that together we can take proactive steps to restore and preserve our unique urban natural resources.” said Secretary Pritchard. “As the marine waters return to this site, and eventually the plants, fish, birds and other animals return, we can look to this restoration as a reminder of the strength of partnerships and of the immeasurable value of our natural resources”

The \$700,000 project is breathing new life into the Neponset Marshes by reconnecting a large swath of the salt marsh with salt water. Restoration work, including excavation and relocation of 30,400 cu.yds. of fill, channel construction, breaching of dikes, and planting of creek banks with saltmarsh cordgrass should be finished by the end of September. The restoration site is within the coastal wetlands known as the “Neponset Marshes”, which are tidally-connected to Boston Harbor. The marshes are part of the 1,300 acre state-designated Neponset River Estuary Area of Critical Environmental Concern. The project will increase the volume of tidal exchange and range, thereby improving the conditions beneficial to wildlife, native salt marsh vegetation, and fish habitat.

A diverse team of state, federal, and private partners were involved in project design, funding, and implementation. The Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation coordinated the

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project planning and helped secure project support from federal Coastal America agencies, including funding from the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and technical services from the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service. Sue Essig, Chief of Habitat Conservation at the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service Northeast office, observed that “this effort underscores the need to restore valuable salt marsh in urbanized areas and allows the broader public to recognize the value of these efforts through future fish and birding recreational opportunities.”

“This unique partnership of government and the private sector is restoring a critical component of the Neponset River Estuary,” said James W. Hunt, Chief of Environment and Energy for the City of Boston. “The City appreciates the support and tireless efforts of all the partners in bringing this much anticipated vision of restored wetland ecosystem to reality.”

The Office of Coastal Zone Management’s Wetlands Restoration Program contributed design and monitoring services. From the beginning, the Corporate Wetlands Restoration Partnership (CWRP) has played a critical role by donating funds and technical services. George Olson of The Gillette Company, and Chairman of the Massachusetts CWRP, estimated the value of contributions to the project from Massachusetts companies at \$81,900. “The Gillette Company is pleased to support Massachusetts’ environmental priorities through this important restoration project. Local projects like these provide critical ecological benefits and enrich our communities.”

The Neponset Marshes restoration is the latest project to be completed with the participation of the Corporate Wetlands Restoration Partnership (CWRP), founded in 1999 by the Massachusetts Executive Office of Environmental Affairs, The Gillette Company and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency-New England. To date, 48 companies have joined the Massachusetts CWRP and 49 projects have CWRP support, including wetlands and fish passage restoration, education, and research. The practice of wetland restoration is the act, process, or result of returning a wetland or former wetland to a close approximation of its condition prior to disturbance. Projects assisted by the CWRP are initiated proactively by local project sponsors who want to bring back the state’s wetland heritage.

For more information regarding the **Corporate Wetlands Restoration Partnership**, please contact:

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